

THE CHRISTIAN VISITANT.

BY A LAYMAN.

"NOCTURNA VERSATE MANU, VERSATE DIURNA."—"BE THESE YOUR STUDIES BY DAY AND BY NIGHT."

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ESSAYS AND PARAGRAPHS, ORIGINAL AND SELECTED.

REFLECTIONS FOR SATURDAY EVENING.

ON SPRING.

"I have heard of Thee, by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee."—JOB XLII. 5.

THESE are the words with which Job concludes the interesting account of his sufferings and his doubts. After a speculative and fruitless conversation with his friends to discover the cause of those afflictions with which the providence of God had visited him, he is represented as at last raising his eyes from himself and his own concerns, towards the Government of Nature: And the Almighty is brought forward as speaking to him from amid the whirlwind of his power, and pointing out to him, amid his despondence, some of the most striking instances in which His greatness and wisdom are manifested in the world that surrounds him. Then Job answered, in the sublime and memorable words of the text, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee."

The words, my brethren, are still applicable to us. Even now, the greatest and most important part of our religious knowledge, our knowledge of the nature and attributes of "Him that made us," is acquired "solely by the hearing of the ear." The early instruction of the parent; the occasional hours of reading and meditation; and the public exhortations of the pulpit—constitute all that the generality of men know upon the most momentous subject of human information. There are few who have been taught in infancy to raise their minds to the contemplation of His works; who love to kindle their adoration at the altar of nature, or to lose themselves in astonishment amid the immensity of the universe; and who thus "seeing Him with their eyes," learn to associate the truths of religion with all the most valued emotions of their hearts. It is the natural consequence of these partial views of the Deity, to narrow our conceptions of his being; to chill the native sensibility of our minds to devotion; and to render religion rather the gloomy companion of the church and the closet, than the animating friend of our ordinary hours.

Reflections of this kind, my brethren, seem very naturally to arise to us from the season we experience, and the scenes we at present behold. In the beautiful language of the wise man, "the winter is now over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land."—In these moments we are the witnesses of the most beauti-

ful and most astonishing spectacle that nature ever presents to our view. The earth, by an annual miracle, rises again, as from her grave, into life and beauty. A new creation peoples the wintry desert; and the voice of joy and gladness is heard among those scenes which but of late lay in silence and desolation. The sun comes forth, "like a bridegroom from his chamber," to diffuse light and life over every thing he beholds; and the breath of Heaven seems to brood with maternal love over that infant creation it has so lately awakened into being. In such hours, there is a natural impulse which leads us to meditation and praise. We love to go out amid the scenery of nature, to mark its progressive beauty, and to partake in the new joy of every thing that lives;—and we almost involuntarily lift our eyes to that Heaven from whence cometh the Hope of man, "which openeth its hand, and filleth all things with plenteousness." Even upon the most uncultivated minds, these seasons have their influence, and wherever, over the face of the earth, the spring is now returning, even amid nations uncheered by the light of the Gospel, the poor inhabitant is yet every where preparing some rude solemnity, to express the renewal of his joy, and the return of his praise. In obedience to this pleasing instinct of religion, I shall endeavour, at present, to lay before you some of the reflections which seem most fitted for this season, and which may be most useful for the ends of piety and virtue.

I.—1. The first reflection which the return of spring presents to us, is with regard to the unchangeableness of the power of the Almighty. We learn from reason, and from scripture, that "God is unchangeable, as He is eternal: that to his years there is no end; that he was, and is, and is to come." All this is the "hearing of the ear." In the present hours "our eyes may see it." It is but a little time, when the earth around us, like the chaos from which it sprung, was without form and void, and when darkness dwelt over the face of the deep. It is now, as in the astonishing hour of creation, lighted up into life and order. The great word of EXISTENCE has again gone forth;—every breeze that blows appears to call some new species of being from the dark womb of nature;—and every returning sun seems to glory, with increasing splendour, over that progressive beauty which his rays have awakened. While we are witnessing this scene of wonder can we forget, my brethren, that it is but the yearly workmanship of God! In the many thousand years that have passed since the beginning of time, the same season has annually been renewed; and the eyes of our fathers, and the old time before them, have regularly witnessed those displays of Omnipotence in which we now rejoice. They all are gone—they and the generations which were before them, are now withdrawn from the light of the sun into

the silence of the grave. But the great Parent of Nature is the same. To Him, and to his power, "there is no variableness, nor shadow of turning:" He now visits the earth, and blesses it with the same profusion as in its infant years; and when we too, and our children, are gathered to our fathers; when the age in which we live shall be lost in the obscurity of forgotten time—even then, the seasons of spring and harvest will return, and the voice of praise will be heard among the dwellings of man.

2. The second reflection which the return of spring teaches us, is with regard to the unchanging *goodness* of the Almighty. This also, my brethren, is a truth which we learn by "the hearing of the ear;" but which no where can be learnt with such efficacy and power, as in those hours when "our eyes may see it." If there is an instinct which leads us now into the scenery of nature, it is not only to amuse us with a transitory pleasure, but to teach us just and exalted conceptions of "Him that made us." In no hours of existence are the traces of his love so powerfully marked upon nature, as in the present. It is, in a peculiar manner, the season of happiness. The vegetable world is bursting into life, and waving its hues, and spreading its fragrance around the habitations of men. "The desert" even, and "the solitary place is glad, and the wilderness springs and blossoms "as the rose." The animal world is marked by still deeper characters of happiness. Myriads of seen, and far greater myriads of unseen beings, are now rising, from every element, into life, and enjoying their new-born existence, and hailing, with inarticulate voice, the Power that gave them birth. The late desert of existence is now filling with animation, and every element around us is pregnant with life, and prodigal of joy. Is there a time, my brethren, in which we can better learn the goodness of the universal God? Is it not wise in us to go abroad into nature, and to associate His name with every thing that, at this season, delights the eye, and gratifies the heart? And is there any image under which it is so useful for us to figure "Him that inhabiteth eternity," as under that of the Father of his Creation: as having called every thing into existence for "his pleasure;" in communicating happiness; and as, in these moments, listening, with placid ear, to every articulate voice that speaks gratitude, and to every inarticulate voice that testifies joy.

II. Such, my brethren, are some of the reflections which most naturally arise at this time, with regard to the great Mind and Parent of existence. They are such as every age, however untaught, has felt; which the wise of every country have cherished; and by which, even amidst ignorance, they have been fully consoled. There are some other reflections, which, at this season, seem very naturally to arise to us as Christians: and there is a beautiful analogy, which I could earnestly wish to impress upon your minds, between the coming of the Gospel, and the arrival of the season of spring. In no respect, perhaps, is our conduct of religious education more imperfect, than in every thing that relates to the system of Christianity; and there is no light in which it can be represented to the young, so useful as that which unites it with every thing that is most exalted and most beautiful in nature.

1. The appearance of spring is then, in the first place, an emblem of the Gospel of our Lord, as it reminds us of the darkness and gloom by which it was preceded. When we look on the state of

the world before the coming of Christ, there is no image that can more justly or more forcibly picture it to our minds than that of the *winter* of humanity. It was a season of moral cold and darkness—when every expanding principle of piety and virtue was checked by ignorance and doubt—and when men wandered amid the severities which surrounded them, uncheered by any effulgence from Heaven. It was a season also, we may remember, peopled with the phantoms of superstition, in which every power of darkness seemed to roam and bear sway, and of which the gloom was only enlightened by the dark flames of a sanguinary altar. Such was the winter of our nature, until the Son of God came to bring us to light.

2. The appearance of spring is, therefore, in the second place, an emblem of the Gospel of our Lord, as it reminds us of that light which his coming hath shed on all the concerns of men. It is in this magnificent and beautiful view, that the Gospel is always predicted by the prophets, and represented by the followers of Jesus. It is the "Day spring from on high," which has come to visit us. It is "the morning spread upon the mountains." It is the Sun of Truth, which shone upon those "that sat in darkness, and in the shadow of" more than mortal "death;" and when we look, accordingly, on the state of the world since the coming of our Lord, nothing can more accurately resemble the influence and the beneficence of spring. Wherever His religion has spread, a new verdure (as it were) has been given to the soul of man. Whatever blesses, or whatever adorns humanity, has followed the progress of his doctrines; laws have been improved, governments enlightened, manners refined, and the mild and gentle virtues of humanity and peace, have sprung into new life and fragrance. "Even the desert," (in the beautiful words of the prophet) "and the solitary place have been glad," and in many a "wilderness" of life—in many a "solitary place" of woe, where the eye of man comes not, the light of Heaven has been revealed, and many a flower of Faith and Hope have blown, unknown to all but the "Sun of Righteousness" which cherished them.

How well, my brethren, would it be for us all, if, under those great and prescribed images, we represented to ourselves the Gospel of our Lord!—if, leaving for a while the narrow and selfish views of the closet, we went forth into the scenes which remind us of the present God, and saw in every instance of his beneficence, an emblem of the "glad tidings" of his Son. Nature herself would then become the friend of piety. The truths of natural, and the truths of revealed religion, would be blended together in our hearts; and every returning spring would bring us with it new motives of love to the God who made, and to the Saviour who redeemed us.

In what I have now said, my brethren, I have presented to you only the religious reflections which the season is fitted to excite. There are some other impressions of a moral kind, which it is also calculated to give us, and which it would be wise in us to associate with the present appearances of nature.

The first of these is the love of *innocence*. It is the *youth* of the year we are witnessing. The trees are putting forth their tender green; and the fields are covered with their young inhabitants. How well is this spectacle fitted to awaken every thoughtful mind to meditation! It reminds us of our own infancy, when the mind was pure, and the heart was happy. It reminds us of that original innocence

in which man was created, and for the loss of which no attainments of mortality can make any compensation. It reminds us of that greater spring "which awaits the righteous: when the pure in heart shall see God; when the Lord shall feed them like a shepherd, and lead them to fountains of living water, and when God shall wipe all tears from their eyes."

The second impression which the season of spring is fitted to make upon us, is the love of nature and humanity. The ordinary scenes of life have a tendency to limit our benevolence, and to confine our interest in nature to the few that surround us. The spring yearly returns, as it were, to dissolve this insensibility, and to expand our affections to a greater circle. We are then the witnesses of the benevolence of God—the Father of Nature seems to come from the dark clouds that surround his throne, to bestow life and happiness over the universe of nature. "Hope riseth in the heart of man;" and every animated being pours forth its song of joy. Is it possible we can contemplate this scene, without feeling our own benevolence exalted? without being reminded anew of the ties which relate us to all the family of God; and without blending with the love of Him "who alone is good," the love also of every thing that He hath made?

The last impression which this season is fitted to make upon us, is that of the love of industry. It is the time when the great labour of nature is carrying on; when the breath of the Almighty is operating upon the earth and upon the deep, "and making all things work together for good." How simple, but how solemn, is the call which this scene makes upon man! We also, my brethren, are parts of the system of God: to us all, some share is delegated in the administration of the universe—some power of contributing to the happiness of the world which he hath made. How happy for us would it be, if we suffered Nature to teach us those unrepublishing lessons; if every spring as it returned, awakened us to new zeal in the service of God, and kindled the noblest ardour of religion, that of being fellow-workers with him in the good of humanity!

I have thus presented to you, my brethren, some of the reflections which seem most naturally to arise at this season, and pointed out some of the uses to which they may be applied. If they are not the direct exhortations of religion, they are perhaps not less important. To contemplate nature with the eye of piety—to associate the image of God with every thing that is great or beautiful in his works,—to see every different scene around us, as only varying testimonies of his love—and to feel those analogies which unite the system of Nature with that of Revelation—are acquisitions which every wise man would wish to make, and which no man can make, without becoming happier and better.

May this, my brethren, be the case with us all! May the mighty scene which we are now permitted to see, exalt our minds to legitimate conceptions of that God who inhabiteth eternity, and "yet humbleth himself to behold the things that are upon earth." And while Heaven is pouring forth its bounty, and Nature rejoicing around us, may we lift our hands in humble adoration to the Parent of Existence, and feel, with the grateful transport of Job! "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee."

ALISON.

For the CHRISTIAN VISITANT.

MOTIVES TO REPENTANCE.

Blush not thou to repent, that wert not ashamed to commit things worthy to be repented of. Forasmuch as it is beyond the compass, and out of the power of the natural man not to sin at all, but that we add daily sin to sin, as a fountain casting up her waters; and that it hath pleased God to promise forgiveness to those that shall truly and faithfully repent them of the same; therefore, the duty of repentance is most necessary for us, seeing, that by it, God in Christ Jesus is reconciled to us. His anger towards us is appeased. We are restored to his favour.

Certainly it is a blessed act to confess our own wretchedness; for whoever humbleth himself, and penitently bewaileth his sins, shall be heard by God, and by Him be delivered from the punishment due for them. ORIGEN says—a contrite heart suffereth no repulse. St. GREGORY, that repentance "is a bewailing for sins already committed, and avoiding for the future the sins for which we grieve; for he that mourns for his sins, and leaves them not, incurs the greater punishment." St. AUGUSTINE, remarks—"It consisteth not in the often repetition and confession of them, without forsaking them; for that is but a simple profession of them, not a repenting for them."

But this is true repentance—when those things seem grievous and bitter to our souls, which in the act were sweet and delightful: And when that ill which was formerly pleasing to us, causeth a hearty and unfeigned grief in us, and provoketh us to look more carefully to our ways for the future.

St. HILARY, says—"It is a true confession of sin, when we repent without intermission. But that is a true repentance of sin, when we forsake that, which we conceive we had cause to repent for."

And, again—"No man ought to commit again the same sin of which he confessed; because there is no true confession of sin, without a profession to leave the same." And this is the fruit of repentance, to lament for sins past, and utterly forsake them for the time to come. Therefore, to repent truly, is nothing else, but to profess and promise, never to offend again.

Seeing then, what repentance is, let us take a view how necessary it is, and for what respects.

1st. In regard of God's hate to sin, and of that God whom we offend, who being infinite, requireth infinite satisfaction.

2nd. In regard of ourselves, as TERTULIAN remarks—"We are men and subject to fall, and therefore we are born to repent of our sins, that we may prevent God's judgments in this world, and to escape his judgment in the world to come—Eternal Death." For as men we shall die, and as Christians we shall give an account. To say somewhat of this death, for by it we shall pass to the other, except repentance and God's mercies prevent it. Death is certain, it will come. It is universal or general—none shall escape it. It is terrible, especially to the wicked.

It is appointed for all men once to die. St. HIEROME calls it—"The necessity of dying is not to be avoided." St. AUGUSTINE

said—"That all things in this life are uncertain, but death: Art thou born? as certain it is thou shalt die." It was the saying of ANAXAGORUS, the Heathen philosopher—"I knew I had begotten no other than a mortal man, hearing of his son's death." This point, and the certainty of it, is easily proved by the experience of former ages, and our own time. The longest liver, METHUSALAH, died—*The patriarchs, prophets, &c. died; and were gathered to their fathers. Where are the Princes of the Heathen become, &c. They are vanished and gone down to the grave.* Gen. xxxix. 29. Jud. ii. 10. Ezra iii. 16.

And as it is certain, so it is universal. It is the house appointed for all the living. "What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death. As well the wise man as the fool. All things that are of the earth shall turn to earth again. Thou art dust, and to dust thou shalt return. It is the ordinance of the Lord over all flesh." But though it be certain in itself, yet in respect of the time, and manner, it is uncertain. For which cause, our Saviour gave his disciples counsel to be prepared for it. "*Watch, for ye know not the day nor hour. Be prepared, for the Son of Man will come at an hour, when ye think not, like a thief in the night.*" The time of our departure is uncertain, whether it shall happen in our infancy, childhood, youth, or age. All men live not while they are old—all men die not while they are young: And many times death cometh unexpectedly, suddenly, in our greatest security. There will come a day when thou shalt be alive in the morning, and dead before night. God hath hid from us the certainty of our end, lest we should promise to ourselves any thing for the future: And, as the time, so the manner is uncertain. Some die in their beds; others perish by fire, sword, water, &c. We have but one way to enter into this world, divers to depart from it.

In itself, it is also terrible. Aristotle and Cicero, say, "Of all terrible things—Death is most dreadful." Our Saviour, CHRIST, began to be heavy, &c. But to mankind in divers respects, it is terrible, —all occasioned by the Devil's malice. Either he bringeth the parties dying, into despair and fear for God's judgments; into security for their own merits; into impatience, by anguish of their sickness; into infidelity, by causing a distrust in God's mercies; into worldly anxiety, about leaving and disposing of their worldly estate; or vain hope, to recover their former health. To a heart that is hardened, death is thought to be farthest off, even when it is felt to approach. St. JOHN says, "*The Devil is come down to you, which hath great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time.*"

Thus much for temporal death, the continual remembrance whereof is so necessary, as nothing more. He that thinketh continually, that he must die, doth not easily sin.

CLERICUS.

APRIL, 5, 1816.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

FROM THE CHRISTIAN HERALD.

SUNDAY SCHOOLS.

[CONCLUDED FROM OUR LAST.]

Mr. RAIKES had very soon occasion to answer another inquiry from Bradford in Yorkshire." His letter is dated "Gloucester, June

5, 1784," and agrees in substance with the foregoing: yet, as it may serve to complete the interesting information upon the subject of the Sunday School, the last which we can receive from the inventor himself, we shall insert it.

"Having found four persons who had been accustomed to instruct children in reading, I engaged to pay the sum they required for receiving and instructing such children as I should send to them every Sunday. The children were to come soon after ten in the morning, and stay till twelve: they were then to go home and return at one; and after reading a lesson, they were to be conducted to church.—After church they were to be employed in repeating the catechism, till half past five, and then to be dismissed, with an injunction to go home without making a noise; and by no means to play in the street. This was the general outline of the regulation.

"With regard to the parents, I went round to remonstrate with them on the melancholy consequences that must ensue from so fatal a neglect of their children's morals. They alleged, that their poverty rendered them incapable of cleaning and clothing their children fit to appear either at school or at church; but this objection was obviated by a remark, that if they were clad in a garb fit to appear in the streets, I should not think it improper for a school calculated to admit the poorest and most neglected. All that I required, were clean faces, clean hands, and the hair combed. In other respects, they were to come as their circumstances would admit. Many children began to show talents for learning, and a desire to be taught. Little rewards were distributed among the most diligent; this excited an emulation. One or two clergymen gave their assistance, by going round to the Schools on the Sunday afternoon, to hear the children their catechism. This was of great consequence.

"Another clergyman hears them their catechism once a quarter, publicly in the church, and rewards their good behaviour with some little gratuity.

"They are frequently admonished to refrain from swearing; and certain boys, who are distinguished by their decent behaviour, are appointed to superintend the conduct of the rest, and make report of those that swear, call names, or interrupt the comfort of the other boys in their neighbourhood. When quarrels have arisen, the aggressor is compelled to ask pardon, and the offended is enjoined to forgive. The happiness that must arise to all from a kind, good-natured behaviour, is often inculcated.

"This mode of treatment has produced a wonderful change in the manners of these little savages. I cannot give a more striking instance than I received the other day from Mr. Church, a considerable manufacturer of hemp and flax, who employs great numbers of these children. I asked him whether he perceived any alteration in the poor children he employed. "Sir," says he, "the change could not have been more extraordinary, in my opinion, had they been transformed from the shape of wolves and tigers to that of men. In temper, disposition, and manners, they could hardly be said to differ from the brute creation. But since the establishment of the Sunday Schools, they have seemed anxious to show, that they are not the ignorant, illiterate creatures they were before. When they have seen a superior come, and kindly instruct and admonish them, and sometimes reward their good behaviour, they are anxious to gain his friendship and good opinion. They are also become more tractable and obedient, and less quarrelsome and revengeful. In short, I never conceived that a reformation so singular could have been effected among the set of untutored beings I employed."

"From this little sketch of the reformation which has taken place, there is reason to hope, that a general establishment of Sunday Schools, would, in time, make some change in the morals of the lower class. At least, it might, in some measure, prevent them from growing worse, which at present seems but too apparent.

"I am, Sir, &c.

"R. RAIKES."

It appears, from the first letter of Mr. Raikes, that the Sunday School originated in 1780. For three years, the schools gradually

extended in his neighbourhood, to which they appear then to have been confined, and where several clergymen, besides the minister mentioned by Mr. R. very laudably contributed to the success of the scheme, by their personal attentions. The report of that success, in and about Gloucester, could not fail to draw attention from other parts of England. In 1784, the plan was adopted in Yorkshire, by several manufacturing towns. In Leeds, 1800 children were speedily collected. In this year the Sunday School at Stockport was opened, which has since exceeded in magnitude any other single establishment of this kind, and has recently been distinguished by the patronage of a branch of the Royal Family.

In 1785, was established, in London, a "Society for the support and encouragement of Sunday Schools," by donations of suitable books, or rendering them of easy purchase, also by remunerating teachers in districts too poor to reward them.

Clergymen of rank now did themselves honour by advocating this cause. Among these, the Rev. Dr. Kaye, Dean of Lincoln, was distinguished by a "Charge delivered to the Clergy of the Archdeaconry of Nottingham." At the same time, the Rev. Mr. Hearne, one of the Rectors of Canterbury, exerted himself zealously among the indigent population of that place. A very gratifying account of his success was given by him in a letter addressed to the Dean of Canterbury, Dr. Horne, afterwards Bishop of Norwich, who interested himself in this cause. The letter is preserved in the gentleman's Magazine for 1786 (V. 56, p. 257,) and also given in the *Selections* from that Magazine, just published (V. iii. 115,) and is well worthy of perusal. Mr. H. candidly states his constant use of Dr. Watts's Songs in the Schools, and the countenance he received from a "Dissenter" and a "Quaker." About this time it was estimated, that no less than 250,000 children, in different parts of England, were under instruction by Sunday Schools.

The late Bishop Porteus, then Bishop of Chester, recommended the formation of Sunday Schools in his extensive diocese. This prelate had early conceived a very favourable opinion of the plan, as we are informed, in his *Life*, just published, and in several instances privately encouraged it.

"But, as an act of prudence, he determined not to give it the sanction of his public approbation, till," as he observes, "time and experience, and more accurate inquiry, had enabled him to form a more decided judgment of its real value, and its probable effects." When, however, repeated information from various quarters, and particularly from some of the largest manufacturing towns in his diocese, had convinced him that such institutions, wherever the experiment had been fairly tried, had produced, and could not fail to produce, if discreetly regulated, essential benefit, he no longer hesitated in promoting them generally throughout his diocese. With this view, as the wisest and most effectual mode of giving publicity to his sentiments, he addressed to his clergy a very excellent letter, containing, in a short compass, a plain, temperate, and judicious exposition of the advantages of Sunday Schools, and of the rules by which they should be conducted." *Life of Bishop Porteus*, p. 93.

Mr. Raikes appears to have been highly favoured in the circumstances of his death, which happened April 5, 1811, in his native city of Gloucester, without any previous indisposition, and in his 76th year. Thus he came to his grave in a full age, and might, surely, have solaced his life's decline with the promise of his great Exemplar—*Blessed art thou, for these cannot recompense thee, but thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.*

In tracing the origin of Sunday Schools, and the life of Robert Raikes, we cannot fail observing that Providence often employs the smallest circumstances, and the efforts, even of individuals, to accomplish its most grand and extensive designs. Who that observed Robert Raikes, surrounded with a number of ragged miserable children, talking with a poor woman respecting their awful situation, agreeing with teachers to pay them himself, would have supposed that he was laying the foundation of a building, the basis of which should cover the

earth, and the top of which should reach unto heaven? If we were asked, whence has the present zeal for the diffusion of religious knowledge arisen? whence those Societies which are the ornament of our country, and the benefactors of the world? we might lead the inquirer to that street in the suburbs of Gloucester, where the idea of Sunday Schools entered the mind of Raikes thirty-three years ago, as their more immediate or remote origin. What continual accessions of felicity may we conceive the spirit of Raikes to receive in the mansions of glory, as he welcomes to Heaven an increasing number of those who have been instructed in Sunday Schools! O, may all the teachers of Sunday Schools, with their founder, attended by an innumerable company of the children whom they have taught, meet in Heaven to ascribe all the glory "unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. Amen."

EPISTOLARY.

LETTERS

FROM BARON HALLER TO HIS DAUGHTER,

On the Truths of the Christian Religion.

LETTER VI.

The commencement of Christianity. By what means so pure a religion was established in so corrupt a world. The causes that contributed to the rapidity of its progress. The proofs which Christ hath given of his divine mission. Life and character of Jesus Christ.

THAT we may throw the greater light upon this subject, it will be useful to look back to the commencement of Christianity, and examine by what means its author was able to establish a religion so little calculated to please the world in its then state of depravity.—We may at the same time extend our inquiries, by considering what were the causes which contributed to the rapidity of its progress, and what were the proofs which Christ hath given of his divine mission. It is well known, that, in the time of Constantine the Great, Christianity was so widely spread, that a council was assembled at Nice, composed of several bishops, that is, of those who had the care of the churches then erected in the principal cities of the empire. After that period, we find all those extensive provinces, from the country of the Parthians as far as Bretagne, filled with Christians. The churches, who confessed the name of Jesus, increased to this astonishing degree, at a time when very severe edicts had been published against them, and when they groaned under the weight of divers persecutions. A short time before, the artful Dioclesian, who had for an associate in the empire the father of the same Constantine, whom we have just mentioned, had determined to cut off, by fire or the sword, all those who professed the Christian faith; and so highly did he applaud himself on account of his great success, that in order to preserve the memory of this bloody transaction, he caused an inscription to be engraven in marble, which implied—*That he had destroyed the very name of Christian.*

If we examine into a more remote period, towards the beginning of the second century, about 70 years after the death of our Saviour, we shall find, that the Christians were so numerous, that the eloquent Pliny, a Pagan and proconsul of Bithynia, complained, that in his province the altars were abandoned, and the worship of the gods neglected. Further back, even about 30 years after the death of Christ, the Christian religion was so well known, that it excited the jealousy as well of the Pagans as of the Jews; they called it a sect odious to the whole world. The Pagans held it in abhorrence, because of its tendency to abolish the worship of the gods which they adored. The Jews were not the less enemies to the Christians, that they sprung from amongst themselves. The cruel Nero laid to their

charge the burning of Rome; a crime which he had himself committed, from an extravagant vanity, of which it is impossible to assign the causes. Not long after his death they formed a numerous society; and, even in those early times, there were churches founded at Babylon, in Asia Minor, in Palestine, in Greece, in Italy, in Rome, and in almost all the provinces of the empire. It would be destroying all historical faith, and introducing an absolute pyrrhonism, not to infer from the writings of St. Paul, that under the emperors Nero and Claudius, there were a considerable number of churches in the principal cities, which were under the Roman government; that bishops (now called priests) and deacons, distinguished for their fidelity, presided over these churches; that they assembled for the public worship of Almighty God, and for celebrating the communion, by breaking of bread, according to the precept of our Lord, as a memorial of his death; that they read the scriptures, and explained all the articles of the Christian faith. And to come nearer to that interesting epocha, the death of our Saviour, we find that, not long after this event, there was a church established at Jerusalem, at Antioch, and in the neighbouring towns. These first churches were founded by the Apostles themselves, whose painful task it was to preach the gospel in all places whithersoever they went. The ordinary services of the church they entrusted to faithful ministers chosen for that purpose. We find also, that in an assembly of the principal disciples of our Saviour, held at Jerusalem, the grand question was disputed, whether the Gentiles were to be subject to the ceremonial law of Moses.—Were we to trace the Christian doctrine to its origin, we should see that its promulgation and establishment were entrusted to the twelve disciples of Christ—men destitute of every thing which could attract public regard or consideration; such as birth, knowledge, or reputation: yet these were the persons who published abroad the death—the ignominious death of their master. They accompanied him in all his labours and peregrinations; they were the auditors of his instructive lessons; and, being furnished with wisdom which he had communicated to them, they became themselves the teachers of mankind.

Having thus ascended by an historical gradation, I come now to Jesus himself, the author of the Christian religion; who sprung from the royal house of David, and who devoted his whole life to the great work for which he was sent into the world. He taught like one instructed by God. As another proof of his divine origin, he lived without any of those faults and infirmities to which men are subject. No one could impeach the rectitude of his conduct. His life was an uninterrupted series of instruction and example, both equally wise and holy. His enemies, exasperated at the success of his doctrine, exerted their utmost efforts to stop its progress, and depreciate the estimation in which he was held. But neither the *Celsusses*, the *Porphyries*, the *Julians*, nor the Jews of past or modern times, have dared to attack the purity of his morals. The doubts, therefore, of the free-thinkers, whether the virtues ascribed to Jesus were absolutely without blemish, are frivolous and of no avail.

In the whole course of his life we see no traces of ambition or worldly views; he even refused the thanks of those on whom he had performed miraculous cures, and whose deliverance from their various maladies impressed them with the highest sense of gratitude.—And when the people, astonished at the number as well as greatness of his miracles, were desirous of placing him on the throne of David, he, by withdrawing himself, refused this proof of their kindness and esteem. He endeavored to eradicate from his disciples all hopes of temporal advantages; and passed his days in voluntary poverty.

To avoid the conversation of men, to whom he appeared a *burning and a shining light*, he passed his nights in solitude and prayer. The gravity of his discourses, the majestic composure with which they were delivered, evidently marked their divine teacher. He spoke as *never man spoke*; this was the declaration of those who heard him, notwithstanding their prejudice against his person and doctrine: and to this testimony I cannot withhold my assent, when I compare his discourses with any of those that have been delivered by the most

eminent philosophers of Greece and China. He was continually employed in doing good; not out of ostentation, in performing prodigies wonderful and supernatural, or in severe acts of justice for the punishment of offenders. His actions were more useful than brilliant, calculated to administer to the wants of men, and remedy the incurable evils of their nature. I shall not attempt, in this place, to demonstrate the reality of these supernatural works; a more favourable opportunity will offer in the sequel. I shall content myself for the present with considering the nature of these miracles, such as the apostles have represented them.

We behold an innocent man delivering himself up to the cruelty of his enemies, and, when his hour was come, cheerfully submitting to the pains of death. If he was an impostor, what could have been his motive in this proceeding? The accusation that he was one, is so daring an instance of impiety, that very few of the enemies of revelation have dared to hazard it. Were voluptuousness, riches or honours, the objects of his pursuit—of him, who constantly preached the great duties of religion; and who suffered some of his disciples to forsake him, because they were terrified with the severity of his precepts, and would continue no longer to be witness of his miracles, or to hear those lessons, which, in their opinion, were too pure and holy?

All the actions of our Saviour—his whole conduct—are perfectly consistent, and form, as it were, one entire piece, as might be expected in an ambassador of God. They all centre in one point—eternity is the sublime subject of his discourses. He surely did not leave the celestial habitations of his Father, for the trifling concerns of this life, which, however, are so eagerly courted by men. In every moment of his life—in every action which he performed, he never lost sight of the great object of his mission. The instructing men in the truth, and the devoting himself as a sacrifice for their sins, was the important business with which he was charged.

But if he acted from other motives, his conduct was altogether inconsistent and unaccountable; for then there will appear the greatest opposition betwixt the cause and the effects—betwixt the design and the means which he employed.—Was he an impostor? Why did he seek for poverty, solitude, and death? Why did he cause some of his followers to leave him, by the terrifying menaces of future evil—by the severity of his precepts, and by that degree of holiness which he required of them? Was he an enthusiast or a fanatic? This is an idea which the free-thinkers of the present time have been fond of starting. Why then did he not affect a behaviour more eccentric? Why did he submit himself, and subject those over whom he had acquired authority by the right of redemption, to the ceremonies of the law? Why did he teach doctrines which no human wisdom could have suggested, and which no person before him had put in practice? Why had all his actions a tendency to one constant, invariable design? His whole life was a prelude to his future sufferings; but to them he did not expose himself till the very hour was arrived, in which it was determined that he was to submit to death.

In short, all these objections which the enemies of our faith have made against Christianity—objections that can serve no other purpose than to raise some doubts in their minds, and which they have employed to defend a bad cause, and discredit revelation, cannot, however, diminish that profound respect which the life and doctrine of our Saviour must naturally inspire in those who contemplate them with attention. This extraordinary person, so superior to all human calumny, when speaking of himself, boldly said, that he was the man described in the writings of the prophets, and who had been promised to the world. He assured them, that God had entrusted to him these divine truths, which he was to declare to mankind, whose redemption he was to effect. There were extant a number of books, incontestably more ancient than Jesus, and the reign of Tiberius, all which announce a Prophet, a Saviour enriched with heavenly gifts, and promised by God to his people.

[TO BE CONTINUED]

INTELLIGENCE FROM ABROAD.

INTERESTING LETTER FROM INDIA.

(COMMUNICATED FOR THE CENTINEL.)

A Letter from the Rev. SAMUEL NEWELL, Missionary in India, to the Rev. EDWARD D. GRIFFIN, D. D. dated

BOMBAY, June 11, 1815.

DEAR SIR,—By the present opportunity I send to Dr. Worcester my journal, which contains the history of all my wanderings and afflictions from my arrival in India till I came to Bombay. I have requested Dr. W. to let you see it. This will supply the place of many letters. You will also learn from our communications to the Board, from time to time, the history of our mission, and its present state. We have been carried through a series of afflictions painful and distressing in the extreme, and have often been ready to say, "The mercies of God are clean gone, and the Lord will be favorable no more." But we can now sing of the goodness and faithfulness of God, and say, "Hitherto the Lord hath helped us." We are now permanently established in this place, and have, through divine goodness, made so much progress in the language as to be able, though with stammering lips, to preach the *good news* to a people to whom Christ was before unknown. Mr. Hall and myself are the only Protestant missionaries on this side of India, except an Armenian Brother at Surat, in connexion with the Serampore mission. The Mahratta language, which we are learning, is the language of many millions of people in this region. There are *two hundred thousand* in Bombay alone. When we look at the multitudes of heathen around us, who are daily dropping in long and rapid succession into the eternal pit, ignorant of what awaits them beyond the grave, we are compelled to take up a lamentation, and say, "O thou slaughtered Lamb of God, why was thy blood shed in vain! Why perish these countless millions of immortal souls for whom thou hast endured the pains of death?" O my dear Sir, who will be answerable for this waste, (if I may so speak,) of redeeming blood? Why do whole nations thus go down to hell from generation to generation? It is only because the church and the ministers of Christ will not obey his last and emphatic command to "Teach all nations." Is not this strange! To what can we attribute this known, wilful, and persevering disobedience to the last authoritative command of the King of Zion? Did not he who said, "Thou shalt not kill," say in as positive a manner, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature"? And is not the breach in the latter command as ruinous in its consequences as the violation of the former? May we not say to the christian, though thou commit no murder, yet if thou disobey the Saviour's last command, then through thy disobedience shall thy heathen brother perish for whom Christ died! When we stand at the distance of 15,000 miles, and look at 600 millions of heathens in Asia in one mass, only a general and comparatively faint impression is made on the mind; but standing, as we now do, in the *midst* of the heathen—and seeing them groping in thick darkness, bewildered in the mazes of most absurd and shocking fictions that the depraved mind of man could invent, wedded to their idols, and enslaved to vice; when we see, as we sometimes have seen, a hundred thousand of our fellow creatures at once dancing and shouting around the bloody ear of Juggernaut, and prostrating themselves before that hateful demon; when we actually behold all the nameless ingredients that go to make up that mass of corruption, guilt and shame, comprised in *idolatry*;—O! it is enough to awaken, in the heart that can feel for the wretchedness of fallen man, every emotion of pity, indignation, grief, and burning zeal. We are sadly deficient in zeal and in duty; but when we look on these heathen, and see how they live, and how they die, and consider how long it has been thus,—we sometimes wish that we could raise our voices to such a pitch that they might reach beyond the intervening oceans and continents, and enter into the ears of our brethren and fathers in America. My dear sir, let me engage you to speak in our behalf,

and plead in our stead the missionary cause before the churches.* They have sent us forth, a little feeble band, to encounter a great host; we have been scattered abroad, and our little number has been considerably reduced. Will the churches that sent us forth now leave us to prosecute the work alone?—We look to them for support in the arduous conflict in which we are engaged. Unless they fill up our ranks which have been broken in the first onset; unless they send forth a GREAT MANY MORE, and determine to prosecute the work with vigor and perseverance, the lives and the treasure they have already bestowed on the object will be thrown away. Where are the numerous converts that have lately been gathered in the churches in the late revivals in different parts of the land? They have enlisted under the banners of the cross; do they not burn with zeal to join the captain of their salvation, and attend his triumphant march, while he goes through the earth conquering and to conquer? Shall we not soon greet some of them as fellow labourers in this part of the vineyard?—Shall we not see others going to strengthen and support, and encourage our dear solitary brother Judson at Rangoon; and others going in different directions to form new stations? But I must stop. Dear sir, let me entreat you again to plead the Missionary cause before the churches, and to call on them by the commission they gave us to preach Christ to the Gentiles,—by the right hand of fellowship which they gave us when they sent us forth,—by all the afflictions and trials which we have suffered in the prosecution of our work,—by the love of Christ and the souls of the heathen, entreat them not to leave us to do this great work alone. Let them send forth, *more Missionaries*,—and still MORE,—and never think they have done enough until the Kingdom of God shall come, and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

* For years past, it has been usual for some of the Ministers who are the most active supporters of the *London Missionary Society*, to travel through the island to preach Missionary Sermons and make collections in favor of missionary objects. Would not something of this kind be proper in this country? Ought not the attention of the religious public, from the Northern to the Southern limits of the States, to be called to the great subject of Missions, and their aid earnestly solicited? *Edit.*

CONNECTICUT.

NEW-LONDON, April 17, 1816.

INSTALLATION.

On Wednesday the 27th ult. the Rev. *Caleb J. Tenny* was installed over the first Church and Society of Wethersfield as Colleague Pastor with the Rev. Dr. Marsh. The Rev. Salmon Cone made the introductory prayer; the Rev. William Lyman, D. D. preached from the 2. Timothy, iv. 7, 8, the Rev. Nathan Perkins, D. D. gave the charge; the Rev. Joab Brace, gave the right hand of fellowship; and Rev. William Lockwood made the concluding prayer.

CHRISTIAN LIBERALITY.

On Wednesday and Thursday of the last week, a large number of the Ladies of East-Haven assembled at the house of the Rev. SAUL CLARK; and made the generous present of about 150 runs of linen and tow yarn. Presents were also made, in money and other articles, sufficient to defray the expenses of the entertainment.

East-Haven, April 8.

NEW-BRUNSWICK, N. J. April 18.

SACRILEGE.—We omitted stating in our last, that a most flagitious act of Sacrilege was committed in this city on Saturday night the 6th inst. by breaking a window in the Baptist Church, a neat brick edifice lately erected, and robbing the pulpit of the BIBLE, and the pews generally of the Psalm Books.—The discovery was first made in consequence of one of our citizens finding a number of mutilated psalm-books in the neighbourhood of the Church. To add to the horrible offence, the perpetrators of this satanic act, broke up the cushions in some of the pews, and otherwise depredated the interior of the building. It is hoped circumstances will lead to the development of the offenders, and that signal punishment will be inflicted on them.

OBITUARY.

NEW-HAMPSHIRE. In Weare, January 29, of a bilious complaint, **NANCY GOVE CRAM**, aged 40. She was the most remarkable woman known in this part of the country. For two years past, she has been a public preacher, and travelled into the Western part of New-York among the different tribes of Indians; proclaiming to them peace on earth, and good will toward men. The Lord remarkably blest her labours, in turning many to righteousness. In November last, she preached twice in this town to the admiration and satisfaction of many who heard her. Thousands will doubtless weep and mourn, that they shall hear her voice, and see her face no more.

RHODE-ISLAND. In Wrentham, on the 20th ultimo, **Mrs. REBECCA M. FARRINGTON**, consort of the Rev. Daniel Farrington, in the 43th year of her age.—To a lively genius and improved mind, she united an amiable and virtuous disposition. Piety and benevolence were the predominant features of her character. During her life she seemed to bear continually upon her mind, the injunction of doing unto others, as she would that others would do unto her. She overcame the troubles and misfortunes of human life with Christian fortitude and patience, and rested on the joyful anticipation of meeting her Saviour and her God, in another and a better world. She has left a large family and a numerous acquaintance, who long will deeply deplore her irreparable loss.

POETICAL DEPARTMENT.

SELECTED.

From the RELIGIOUS REMEMBRANCE.

LINES WRITTEN BY J. C. LAVATER.

"For we have not an High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities: but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."—
HEB. iv. 15.

When gathering clouds around I view,
And days are dark and friends are few;
On him I lean who not in vain,
Experienc'd every human pain,
He sees my wants, allays my fears,
And counts and treasures up my tears.

If aught should tempt my soul to stray
From heavenly virtue's narrow way,
To fly the good I would pursue,
Or do the sin I would not do,
Still he who felt temptation's power
Shall guard me in that dang'rous hour.

If wounded love my bosom swell,
Deceived by these I priz'd too well,
He shall his pitying aid bestow,
Who felt on earth severer woe;
At once betray'd, denied or fled
By all that shar'd his daily bread.

When vexing thoughts within me rise,
And sore dismay'd my spirit dies,
Yet he who once vouchsafed to bear
The sickning anguish of despair,
Shall sweetly soothe, shall gently dry
The throbbing heart, the streaming eye.

When sorrowing o'er some stone I bend,
Which covers all that was a friend;
And from his voice, his hand, his smile,
Divides me—for a little while:

Thou Saviour se'st the tears I shed,
For thou didst weep o'er Lazarus dead.

And O! when I have safely pass'd
Thro' every conflict—but the last,
Still, still, unchanging, watch beside
My painful bed—for thou hast died,
Then point to realms of cloudless day,
And wipe the latest tear away.

CHRIST THE BELOVED.

O thou in whose presence my soul takes delight,
On whom in affliction I call,
My comfort by day and my song in the night:
My joy, my salvation, my all.

Where dost thou at noon-tide resort with thy sheep,
To feed on the pastures of love;
For why in the valley of death should I weep,
Alone in the wilderness rove.

For why should I wander an alien from thee,
Or cry in the desert for bread;
My foes would rejoice when my sorrows they see,
And smile at the tears that I shed.

Ye daughters of Zion declare have ye seen,
The Star that on Israel shone?
Say if in your tents my Beloved hath been,
And where with his flocks he hath gone?

This is my Beloved,—his form is divine,
His vestments shed odours around;
The locks on his head are as grapes on the vine,
When Autumn with plenty is crown'd.

The roses of Sharon, the lilies that grow
In vales, on the banks of the stream;
His cheeks in the beauty of excellence glow,
His eyes all invitingly beam.

His voice as the sound of a dulcimer sweet,
Is heard through the shadows of death;

The cedars of Lebanon bow at his feet;
The air is perfumed with his breath.

His lips as a fountain of righteousness flow,
That waters the garden of grace;
From which their salvation the Gentiles shall know,
And bask in the smiles of his face.

Love sits in his eyelids and scatters delight
Thro' all the bright mansions on high,
Their faces the cherubims veil in his sight,
And tremble with fullness of joy.

He looks and ten thousands of angels rejoice,
And myriads wait for his word;
He speaks, and eternity, fill'd with his voice,
Re-echoes the praise of her Lord.

PRAYER.

BY ROBERT BURNS.

Under pressure of Violent Anguish.

O! Thou Great Being!—What thou art
Surpasses me to know;
Yet sure I am that known to thee
Are all thy works below.

Thy creature here before thee stands,
All wretched and distressed;
Yet sure those ills that wring my soul
Obey thy high behest.

Sure thou, ALMIGHTY, cannot act
From cruelty or wrath!
O free my weary eyes from tears,
Or close them fast in death!

But if I must afflicted be,
To suit some wise design;
Then man my soul with firm resolves,
To bear and not repine.

* * * *